

Mantis Study Group Newsletter 24 & 25

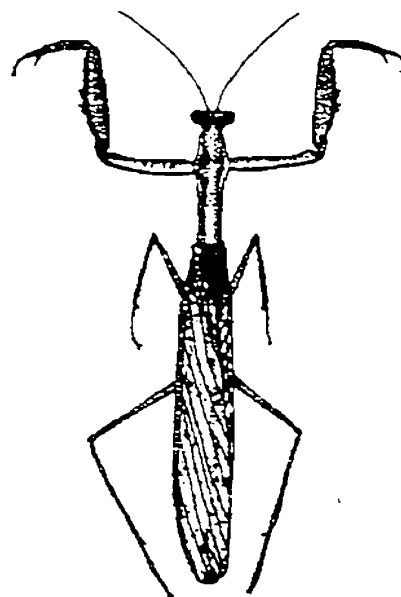
May / August 2002

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Editorial

With nothing submitted, there was no newsletter in May. I have received one article for this newsletter - thanks Andy. Andy's article arrived in plenty of time for the newsletter to be produced in August but unfortunately I was rather busy with other things so I must apologise for the lateness of this issue.

Exhibitions

5th October 2002

AES exhibition at Kempton Park Racecourse. About one mile from junction one of the M3. Doors open at 1100. The MSG will be exhibiting at this event.

2nd November 2002

Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Entomological Society exhibition. At Broomfield College, Morley, Derbyshire. Open 1130-1630. Just off the A608, about 5km north of Derby. We expect to be exhibiting at this event.

Mantids in 2001 — Andy Lasebny.

Last year's (2000), search for *Mantis religiosa* for the filming of a BBC documentary, resulted in a film called "Enter the Mantis". Though it has not been shown in the USA yet, it was shown in the UK in the beginning of July. A few weeks before that, I did receive a video tape from the BBC, as promised, of that program, and it is very interesting. Though the mantids I gathered appeared in the film for only a few minutes, there was plenty of interesting footage of many other species, including the foreleg waving communications of flower mantids like *Creobroter*, which many of us who keep these have observed, but were never filmed before. The film is very well done, and has a clever martial arts theme analogy, with the face of Bruce Lee reflected in the eye of the mantis before it strikes - quite an original and effective concept that ties the film together quite well. Unlike many nature films I have seen that show an occasional mantis, this is the only one that seemed to have captured that mantis "personality" that those of us who keep them know. By focusing on the face and expressive body language more than other films of these creatures do, this film more accurately shows someone not familiar with these creatures what they are really like. They just seem so much more animated in this film. The only criticism I have of this and many televised nature films is the lack of information given about the species and country of origin

of many of the creatures being filmed. Though we as mantis keepers know much of this, it would help to educate the general public about this some more, with a brief mention of the scientific name, or at least genus, of the species that is on the screen and where it lives. Only a few of the species shown had any mention of even what sort of habitat they live in. Even if the creatures were not filmed in their native country on location, such information could be helpful to anyone who is watching and would like to pursue the topic further.

This year, unlike the unusually cool summer of 2000, has been a typical New Jersey summer. Warm temperatures into the mid 20's Celsius with heat waves into the 30's lasting several days every so often. The first *Mantis religiosa* adult was a green male I found on August 1. He was on the aluminum window frame of a liquor store, about 30cm above the ground, at around 0815 in the downtown area where I work.

August 2nd - At 0730 I take the same walk as yesterday, but I start going in the other direction - into town where the stores are first, then all the way around until I get back to the office building I work in. There I find another green male *Mantis religiosa*, right under the concrete ledge about 60cm above the ground, as I do each year in this spot.

August 5th - A case of "deja vu" from last year - a phone message from the BBC wanting more mantids - just like last year. They apparently need some additional footage of mating for another documentary. They want *Mantis religiosa* again.

August 7th - A walk at 0700 by the shopping centre outside of town on the highway does not produce any mantids, but a drive to a nearby store does - a green male *Mantis religiosa* is on the ground near the door. While walking in downtown, I find another green male on the window frame of a store. The heatwave is on, and it supposed to stay hot and humid all week - great for finding mantids.

August 8th - This time, a walk at the shopping centre on the highway does produce results - a green male on a vertical window frame, (they usually hide on the inner surface, pressed down toward the frame, close to the glass), and one on the ceiling of the canopy walkway. He is too high to reach, so I continued my walk, hoping to get him later with a stick. On the way I see a green female on the other side of the parking lot on the stalk of a small shrub that is part of some landscaping around a small restaurant building. She appears to have just landed there and was about to take off to go onto the nearby wall when I got her. As I walk back to get the other male, I find a tall weed behind a building and pull it out of the ground in order to use it as a way of getting him down. As I approach the spot where he is, I see 3 sparrows - one had just come down from where he is - I thought the bird ate him, but no, as I get closer I notice he is in his threat posture, with wings raised and forelegs folded back - looks like he successfully fought off the bird. I did not think this rather small species would be effective in deterring a bird. The temperature is 38°C in the afternoon.

August 9th - The same walk, at 0745, and as I walk along I see a green female *Mantis religiosa* right on the upper portion of the stucco entrance of one of the stores at the shopping centre. She is way out of reach. I see her looking up at something - there is a large green katydid up near the roof. I continue walking, and find no more, and when I get back to her, she is even higher up, over 6m, near the roof. I drive to a nearby department store parking lot, and see a green male right on the window as I drive by. I take him and go downtown. As I walk around the building I work in, I find a brown male right under the concrete projection only a few metres from where I found the one on August 2nd. During lunch, I drive to the shopping centre to see if the female has come down. She is still way up there. Even though the temperature is 39°C, it does not appear to bother her. I thought she would have been seeking shelter under the canopy by now. At home at night, at around a half hour

before midnight, I go out into the hot 24°C night to walk the dog, and see a green female *Mantis religiosa* on the door of a house only a few houses away from mine. She is on the door frame under a bright light. I take her home and put her into a cage.

August 10th - The female that was high up on the store wall is gone by morning. Who knows what happened to her. Nothing new at this area, but I do find a brown male in the downtown area on a donut shop window frame, close to where I found the first one of the year on the liquor store window frame.

August 11th - On this Saturday night, after coming back from a concert, my wife and I decide to go to a restaurant that is open 24 hours, not far from the town I live in. After eating, sometime after midnight, I walk out the door and see a female *Mantis religiosa* up on the window head of one of the many large windows along the front. I go to the car and get a stick, and get her down.

August 13th - The usual morning walk before work, and I do not find any until I drive into the downtown area. There I see a green mantis as I am waiting at the traffic light. It is high up, at least 6m, on the light gray stucco wall of a tall building. I drive to the office and park the car. I walk over to the area and see that it is a green male, but he is way too high. I continue walking, and toward the end of the walk I find a green female right up under a window head on one of the stores close to where I found 2 males earlier in the month. She is easy to reach, and I take her.

August 14th - No *Mantis religiosa* found today, but in the evening on the way home, a few miles from my house, I stop into a supermarket and find the first adult *Tenodera aridifolia sinensis* female on the window sill of the store. She is big and brown, and an adult right on time. Though the nymphs had a poor start in June, with some very small nymphs growing too slowly in early July seen in various gardens, the extreme heat later in the month and in August caused them to grow very fast and they caught up.

August 15th - The morning walk produced nothing, but when I walked to a different part of town during lunch and came near an area I was at in the morning, I saw a yellowish tan male *Mantis religiosa* on the side of a red aluminum window frame of a video rental store. Though I was near there in the morning, I did not walk to the very end of the building, so I did not see him then. He was probably there all along. In the evening, I drive to the same supermarket as yesterday, and find a green male *Mantis religiosa* under a window sill.

August 16th - In the morning, I find a green female *Mantis religiosa* on the window frame of a large department store near the other shopping centre outside of town, same place as on August 9th.

August 17th - Nothing in the morning, but when I went to the bank in the downtown area, as I walked down a side street, I spotted a brown female *Mantis religiosa* on the window of a small commercial building next to the bank. She is an interesting dark bronze colour, with golden highlights on the wings and parts of the body. At night, I drive home a different way, and as I drive toward the ocean, I see a mantis profile on the door frame of a boat dealer. I can see it from the highway, and I turn around. It is a brown female *Tenodera aridifolia sinensis*. I take her and release her near my house into the dune grass by the beach.

August 19th - I go shopping to a large mall about 15 minutes from my house. I pull into the parking lot in front of one of the large department stores, and as I am walking toward the entrance, I see a green male *Mantis religiosa* on the corner of the bright white painted concrete block wall. I take him and put him in a bag, then go shopping. On the way out, I take a closer look around the entrance, and there is a green female right behind the garbage can, below where the male was. Curious, I drive around to the other entrance,

and see two more of the same species. Both are too high to reach, but one is possible. I come back later after the store closes and reach a green male with a stick, but another one is way up about 8m high, so I do not get that one.

August 20th - During my usual walk this Monday morning, I find a green male *Mantis religiosa* on the window head of the same liquor store I found the first one of the season, in the downtown area.

August 21st - During the morning walk around the shopping centre by the highway, and find a green male on the wall below the glass storefront - he is in the process of eating a moth. I was thinking of letting him finish the meal, but there are so many birds around that if I do not take him now, a bird might, since he is only a few centimetres above the ground. During lunch, I walk to the bank, and look at the windows of the small commercial building that I found the female on 4 days ago. To my surprise, there is a green male on the same window, only about 15cm away from where the female was. Very strange coincidence. Or did the male detect some left over female pheromones? On the way home from work I stop into the supermarket that I found the big Chinese female on August 14th. I take a quick look, and see nothing. But when I enter the store, I notice a green male *Mantis religiosa* on the inside of the vestibule. He must have flown in when the door was open the night before.

August 23rd - I have the day off from work, so I do not do my usual walk, but in the afternoon, as I am driving down one of the highways not far from where I live, I stop at a traffic light and see a brown mantis on the window of a furniture store, near the ground. I park the car and get out, and it is a female *Mantis religiosa*. But she is injured - a back leg is missing, and there is some abdominal damage. She must have slammed into the window at full speed while flying.

August 24th - I arrive early at the shopping centre on the highway where I work, and find a brown female *Tenodera aridifolia sinensis*. She is at the top of one of the concrete columns that hold up the canopy. I get her down with a stick.

August 28th - The season for *Mantis religiosa* is winding down, and there appear to be no more coming to the lights. The females are without a doubt too heavy to fly by now, and the males are too busy mating, and there have been a lot of losses due to predation by birds, other mantids, and other natural means. This morning I walk throughout the same places and find nothing - until at the end of the walk, right across from that liquor store in the downtown area where I found the first one of the season, I spot a green mantis up on the highest portion of one of the concrete columns that hold up the canopy roof. I see it as I look back from about 8m away. As I approach it to get a better look, it appears too big to be a *Mantis religiosa*, but too small to be a *Tenodera aridifolia sinensis*, unless it is a very undersized one. Looks like it may be a *Tenodera angustipennis*. I go back to the car and get a stick, and get this green female down. The orange spot between the forelegs positively identifies her as *Tenodera angustipennis*. Good - all three New Jersey species this year! Now if I could find a male, it would be great.

August 29th - This morning, during the downtown part of the walk, as I walked around one of the buildings to get to the other side where the parking lot is, I looked down by the wall and spotted a greyish brown mantis on the ground at the base of the wall - another female *Tenodera angustipennis*. I have not seen a brown female of this species since the late 1970's. It's strange how in the three New Jersey mantis species different species have different colour variations that are more common. In *T. sinensis*, brown is more common. In *M. religiosa* and *T. angustipennis*, green is more common. But only in females - all *T. angustipennis* males I ever saw were always brown, except for that green stripe along the edge of the

forewing. And in this species that stripe is duller in colour than in *T. sinensis*.

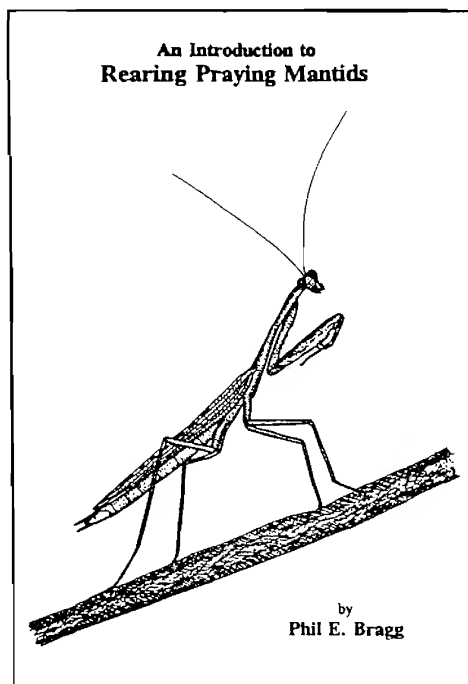
August 30th - During the first part of the walk at the shopping centre by the highway, I find a green male *Mantis religiosa* hanging upside down from the ceiling of the canopy walkway, and get him down with a stick. For some reason, there has been an unusually large number of small grasshoppers around the storefronts the last few days, and today there are at least 2 dozen. These are red-legged grasshoppers, a very common species found here. Free mantis food - so I quickly fill a bag with these.

September 1st - During the late morning, I am driving through a beach town 3 towns south of my town. As I stop at a traffic light, I spot a green female *Mantis religiosa* on the dark red painted wall of a fast food restaurant. I drive into the parking lot and take her. Further in that town I see a brown male of this species on the wall of a hardware store. I take him as well. Later in the evening, I go to the shopping centre about 10 minutes north on the highway that has the supermarket I found mantids on previously, and find a green male on the wall of a nearby movie theatre.

September 3rd - After going shopping to the supermarket where I had found mantids previously, I find a green male *Mantis religiosa* inside the building again - this one not just in the vestibule, but on the concrete block wall by the cash registers.

This became the very last *Mantis religiosa* that I found this season. They were packed up and shipped out to the UK on Monday, September 24th. There were many delays, and difficulty in finding a shipping company that would take the package for a reasonable price, all due to the attack on New York City on September 11th. But they did arrive safely, 22 individuals, seven of them females. Throughout September, there were many sightings of *Tenodera aridifolia sinensis*, mostly in the town I live in, in various gardens. In my garden, several females of that species were in the butterfly bush, once again, and they were preying on the various species of butterflies that came to the flowers. Large numbers of monarchs, up to a dozen at one time, would come, in addition to painted ladies, red admirals, and various swallowtails. The monarchs were frequent victims, as the mantids stalked them throughout each day. Several males passed through the garden, and the first egg case was made on around September 15th. Though these mantids did manage to reproduce last year and continue living in my garden, I saw less of these in other gardens than I did last year. On a few mornings in late September, I saw several males on walls of houses and garages, and a few on plants in gardens in the late morning and early afternoon, but not as many as last year. Fewer still in October, and by the third week of that month, none were visible anymore. However, on November 4th, I saw a green female *Tenodera aridifolia sinensis* on the Clematis vine that is on my back fence. It was a relatively mild day, and she had come out of the dense vine. I took that one in. With still no frost on the 11th, I saw a brown female in a nearby garden, in a fenced in property, about a half a block from the beach. Why the lower number of adults this year I do not know, but last year's unusually cool weather may have prevented many of the females from laying eggs in time, causing a lower number of hatchlings to be present this year. Or it could be a coincidence in that more egg cases were lost in the winter due to birds or rodents finding them, plus a combination of more egg cases that usual getting thrown out when gardeners trimmed their shrubs. After all, there was a normal number in my garden. After lots of consistently warm days, a light frost came on December 10th, but not really enough to even damage annuals. In theory, there could have been a live mantis or two still alive out in these coastal gardens in mid-December, but there is so little plant density left that only those lucky enough to be in evergreen shrubs and near some of the few and far between flowers would survive. Once dense natural meadows

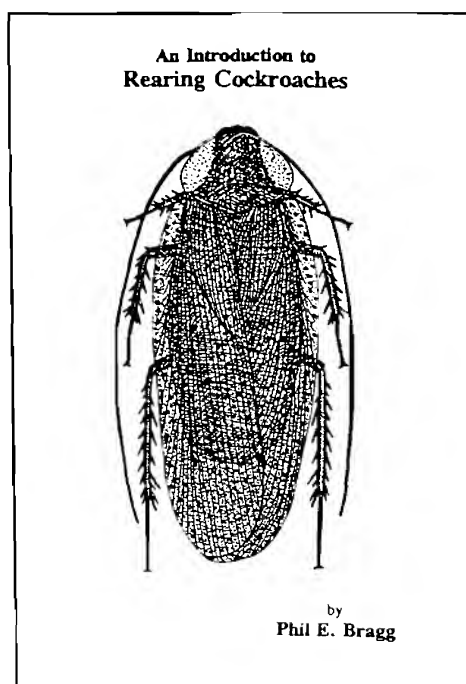
are nothing but sparse dry stalks now, so no mantis could have been in those places after early to mid November. This year, mantis season here at the shore does not end with a definite, hard killing frost, but slowly fades away as the strangely warm weather of this December slowly cools down, and dips below freezing during the week of Christmas.



An introduction to Rearing Praying Mantids

A5 softback, 16 pages, 10 figs. ISBN 0-9531195-0-5.
This book describes methods of rearing and breeding praying mantids. The headings include: An introduction to praying mantids, Types of mantids, Structure of mantids, Mantids in captivity, Cages, Feeding, Breeding, Sexing, Mating, Egg laying, Identification, Preserving mantids, Obtaining mantids, Distributing mantids, and Sources of further information.

The book is illustrated with 10 black and white drawings, plus one on the front cover. The drawings illustrate six different species of mantids, how to distinguish the sexes, details of the fore leg, and an internal view of an egg case.



An introduction to Rearing Cockroaches

A5 softback, 16 pages, 14 figs. ISBN 0-9531195-1-3.
This book is intended as a beginners' guide to rearing cockroaches. It is illustrated with 14 black and white drawings, plus one on the front cover. The drawings illustrate eight different species of cockroaches and show how to distinguish the sexes.

There is a general introduction to cockroaches with information on the structure and different types. The commonly available species are grouped according to general type and their suitability for culturing. Cages, feeding, sexing and preserving are all discussed. There are suggestions on obtaining and distributing cockroaches, and there is a list of books offering further information.

Price: £2.50 each. Postage should be added at the following rates: UK 20p, Europe 70p, Elsewhere £1.10.

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